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AUTHOR Adams, Charles F.
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ABSTRACT

The author makes three assumptions in discussing the effect of collective negotiations on teachers' sense of alienation: first, alienation is a multidimensional concept that, in this context, is taken to derive from within the organizational setting of the school system; second, school systems are organized as bureaucracies containing more or less the general characteristics of Weber's "ideal type" bureaucracy; and third, negotiations in school systems deal with both the centralization of authority and the rule structure of the organization. The conceptual scheme based on these assumptions is that teacher alienation from work, the sense of powerlessness and meaninglessness, is related to the extent to which the bureaucratic structure of the school provides the means for teachers to become involved in the decisions affecting the rules and regulations governing their work. The negotiation process is seen as a means whereby teachers may have increased input into the decision-making authority of the organization and, consequently, provide a rule structure that has more meaning to them. Three hypotheses are derived as a guide to further research. What is critical is the degree to which the negotiation process is truly a joint decision-making one and the nature of the rule structure that develops from the negotiations. (Author/IRT)

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ALIENATION AND THE NEGOTIATION PROCESS

Charles F. Adams

Introduction and Statement of the Problem

The perspective of this paper involves the concept of alienation from work as it relates to the negotiating process. A conceptual framework is developed in the first part of the paper followed by a brief review of selected studies and writings which lend support to the conceptualization. Finally, three hypotheses are derived as a guide to further research into the relationships.

Collective negotiations between teacher groups and boards of education are a fairly recent phenomena. In the last few years legislation has been enacted in most states formalizing negotiations in the public sector including education. Initially, the thrust of teachers' associations and unions in negotiations was to obtain increases in salaries and wages More recently, these teacher groups appear to be directing increased attention to demands for greater involvement in policy formulation and decision-making processes of school systems. Wynn, in examining the forces that are generating this thrust, points out that, "Another factor that has prompted the disenchantment of teachers is the stultifying effect of bureaucratic administrative organization, particularly in many large school systems, upon the dignity of the teacher."[1] It would seem that prior to the introduction of collective negotiations teachers did not feel they had a satisfactory process through which to influence the operation of their school system.

The concept of alienation has received much attention in the literature of the behavioral sciences in the past ten years, especially the sense of alienation a worker in modern bureaucratic organizations experiences. More recently, studies of problems in organizations have focused on the sense of

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alienation the work force feels as an outgrowth of the bureaucratic structure.[2] Within the school organization an understanding of the teachers' sense of alienation may provide some insight to the impact of collective negotiations.

The question this paper will examine is: Has the advent of collective negotiations had any relationship to teachers' sense of alienation?

Basic Assumptions and Definitions of Terms

A basic assumption of this paper is that alienation is a multi-dimensional concept. In his study Kolesar found support for the logically distinct and measurable variants of the five basic components of alienation listed by Seeman.[3] They are: powerlessness, meaninglessness, anomie, isolation, and self-estrangement.[4]

The sense of alienation a person has in any work situation can be thought of as that generalized sense of anomie or estrangement from the world at large and the sense of powerlessness, meaninglessness, and isolation one has that is directly associated with the work situation. It is Barakat's contention that, " . . . alienation from society or the world at large is different from alienation from a certain specific system such as a school."[5] Or, as Kolesar states, it can focus on a specific object; in this case the object is the school. Etzioni also differentiates between personal disorganization and alienation that is the result of power wielding in a social organization. He says:

> . . . the term [alienation] reminds us that varying applications and kinds of power create different kinds of subject-and-power-wielder relationships and affect the totality of social organization. Thus, if one kind of social organization relies to a greater extent on force to advance its goals than another, this will affect not only the psychic states of those subjected to the exercise of power but also the pattern of the relevant social

> structure and most social relations within it. For instance, the application of power is expected to increase the distance between the members of the social unit and the fruits of their labor, render their social world less meaningful, and make the social structure less responsive. Thus, alienation has both subjective and objective facets -- the psychic states of the subjects and power-wielders and the patterns of the societal unit.[6]

For the purpose of the present formulation, a teacher's sense of alienation that develops out of the work situation is to be examined, not his sense of anomie or estrangement. Or, in Etzioni's terms, the sense of alienation that is part of the pattern of the social unit not the psychic states of the individual. The paper will focus on the teachers' sense of alienation that arises within the organizational setting of the school system. This notion will be referred to as alienation from work and is defined as the sense of powerlessness a teacher feels over the work situation and his sense of non-involvement in the organization. As Seeman states, "This variant of alienation [powerlessness] can be conceived as the expectancy or probability held by the individual that his own behavior cannot determine the occurrence of the outcome, or reinforcements, he seeks [in the work situation]."[7]

A second assumption of this paper is that school systems are organized as bureaucracies containing more or less the general characteristics of Weber's "ideal type" bureaucracy. The four major characteristics ascribed to bureaucracies are: task specialization, hierarchy of authority, a system of rules and regulations, and impersonality.[8] Two of these characteristics, centralization of authority and a system of rules and regulations, are assumed to be more closely associated with a teacher's sense of alienation than the others. It is contended that the system of rules and regulations form the basis for access to power or authority positions in school organizations. It provides the means to accomplish the purposes and objectives of the staff.

When access to authority or power positions is felt to be minimal, teachers may feel powerless and meaningless in their work roles.

Collective negotiations is a formalized process whereby representatives of an employee group, in this case teachers, meet with the school board or its representatives to jointly determine salaries and working conditions.[9] The result of this process is a written agreement, " . . . on a basic rule system to govern the work relationship and organized arrangements for resolving disagreements and problems as they arise day-to-day."[10] Thus, the third and final assumption is that negotiations in school systems deal with both the centralization of authority and the rule structure of the organization.

These assumptions then form the basis of this conceptual scheme. Teacher alienation from work, their sense of powerlessness and meaninglessness, is related to the extent to which the bureaucratic structure of the school provides the means for teachers to become involved in the decisions affecting the rules and regulations governing their work. The negotiation process is seen as a means whereby teachers may have increased input into the decision-making authority of the organization, and subsequently providing a rule structure that has more meaning to them.

Recent Research on Teacher Alienation

Barakat in a study conducted in Michigan in 1966 found that a teacher's sense of alienation was directly related to the degree of bureaucracy in a school system.[11] The more highly bureaucraticly structured the school system, the greater was the teacher's sense of alienation. This author in a study completed in 1969 found a significant correlation between teachers' perceptions of the organizational structure of schools and their sense of alienation. The

conclusion drawn was that, ". . . when teachers perceive a high degree of centralization of authority and rule structure in the school's organization, they tend to feel more alienated from their work and from their fellow workers."[12]

In this same study it was also found that:

> The leadership style of the building principal was found to be significantly related to the sense of alienation of the teachers. The executive professional leadership of the principal, [as defined by Gross and measured by his scale] . . . had a strong negative correlation with both alienation from work (-.49) and alienation from fellow workers (-.43).[13]

Racz, in a study conducted recently (1970), attempted to verify the relationship between teachers' sense of alienation from work and the leadership style of the building principal. He concludes:

> It would appear from these test results that leadership which is perceived to be "Person-Oriented" is associated with lessening an individual's sense of alienation from work. This finding supports Moeller and Charter's (1966) study which found that teachers who interact on a "personal" level with their principal perceive a higher sense of power in their roles than do teachers who do not. This test result is also consonant with Adams' (1969) study which found a high correlation between leadership behavior characterized by consideration of the teacher as a "person" and alienation from work.[14]

Weinberg, McHugh, and Lamb in a study conducted under a contract with the U. S. Office of Education examined whether various contexts of work-personality, role, and organization -- had a relationship to various forms of teacher alienation. They hypothesized that an incongruence of the demands of the three variables would be related with a high sense of teacher alienation. Their findings did not support this contention.

> As an explanation, degree of integration between facets of social organization suffered a serious blow. It was further diminished when we discovered that focus, or substantive activity (student vs. content) was more regularly associated with alienation. Our evidence indicates that it is not the integration of demand, but the substance of demand that makes man alienated.[15]

When they examined the relationship between four types of school organization with teacher alienation, they found that alienation was positively related in schools organized rather traditionally around subject specialties that focused on future occupations and a consistant negative relationship between alienation and schools organized with a focus on individual student development.[16] They explain this finding in terms of the rule structure of bureaucracy.

> If we take the school as organization, however, we must note that some kinds of schools are positively related to alienation, others negatively related, and thus, given that all schools exhibit bureaucracy, not all bureaucracy is bad (assuming that alienation is bad, but even this is not always justified). The reason that bureaucracy is bad, so the argument goes, is because bureaucracy constrains its members in the sense that bureaucracy is rule-governed. The point here is that, given the consistently negative relation between the Individual Development organization and alienation, and accepting the idea that all bureaucracies are rule-governed, we must question the assumption that all rule-governed people will be constrained in an alienative way. Apparently, the rules of Individual Development schools, which focus upon the student and his own particular capacities and interests, free the teacher to the extent that he conceives his work and himself as integrated. . . Bureaucracy is not inevitably related to alienation; the existence of rules doesn't generate disaffection, but the kind and quality of those rules do. It is essential that we think of modern life . . . not as the comparison of the existence of rules against the absence of rules, but rather as a comparison of rules that engender freedom against rules that do not.[17]

Relationship Between Negotiations and Teacher Aleination

If indeed there is a relationship between a teacher's sense of alienation and the organizational structure of schools as the research seems to indicate, then there may also be a relationship between teacher alienation and the negotiation process. The thrust of teachers to become more involved in the decision-making process affecting their work situation might be considered a manifestation of their desire to reduce their sense

of alienation from work. The negotiations process, when it is truly a joint decision-making process, is a modification or movement away from the traditional centralization of authority characteristic of bureaucratic school system organization. If the teacher's sense of alienation from work is related to the extent of centralization of authority in the school organization and the degree of centralization of authority is related to the negotiations process, then the teacher's sense of alienation is related to the negotiations process.

Hypothesis 1: There is an inverse relationship between teachers' sense of alienation from work and the extent to which collective negotiations is a joint decision-making process.

This hypothesis, if confirmed, indicates the potential of the negotiations process for increasing the sense of power of teachers. If they are accorded the ability to have a meaningful share of the decision-making power, which by definition is a reduction in the centralization of decision-making authority in schools, then their sense of alienation from work in terms of powerlessness will be low. However, data from recent studies on the impact of negotiations are not conclusive in this regard though they do lean in the direction of support.

In a case study of 22 school districts conducted by Perry and Wildman they state:

> The establishment of a collective bargaining relationship can significantly alter the distribution of power among the various groups with interest in the schools and, in extreme cases, may grant to teachers an effective veto power in the decision-making process . . . Collective bargaining assures teachers of access to the centers of decision-making power in a school system.[18]

At the same time, Perry and Wildman indicate that the negotiations process, as it currently exists, serves to shift a great deal of the practical decision-making power in the organization to a few top level administrators. They also

say this has been at the expense of the school principal, ". . . whose discretion is eroded by the central policy decisions required in negotiations. The result is resentment and disaffection among principals."[19] They state further that, "There is some similar centralization of decision-making on the teacher side of the relationship."[20] The few chosen teacher representatives, even though elected democratically, have the authority to make decisions for all the teachers. This does not generally allow for inputs from minority segments of the teaching force but usually represents the interests of the more militant and politically active segment. It might be posited that those teachers who see their viewpoints as being represented in negotiations will be less alienated, while those who are not in accord with the teacher negotiations would have an increased sense of alienation in that they no longer have the traditional informal means of influence available as a result of the specification of formal negotiations procedures.

Included in the definition of negotiations is its establishment of a system of rules as an outgrowth of the negotiations process. A rigid system of rules and regulations governing teachers' work relationships was seen to have a direct relationship with teachers' sense of alienation from work and fellow workers. Again through the same process of logical reasoning as applied in the first hypothesis, a relationship between collective negotiations and the teachers' sense of alienation is hypothesized.

Hypothesis 2: There is a direct relationship between the teachers' sense of alienation from work and the degree to which the negotiation process increases the proliferation and specificity of rules governing the teachers' work relationships.

As Weinberg et. al. found in their study teachers were less alienated when the rules governing teachers' work allowed them the freedom to focus

upon individual students. In a school setting where diversity of teacher role is the norm, there does not seem to be the sense of alienation that is found in a school system, ". . . which has institutionalized the standards for those within it . . ."[21], especially those schools integrated along the lines of a content focus. "Alienation is built into such a system by its very existence, an existence which by other standards might be called 'smooth running'."[22] Unless the result of collective negotiations is a set of policy guidelines and rules that frees teachers to work with students in ways they see appropriate, there will probably be very little reduction in the teachers' sense of alienation from work.

If the rule structure is established jointly through the negotiations process, then the specified work relationships could be considered more satisfactory to the teacher group and the administration. Administrators, especially principals, would be less involved in developing and initiating task structures and would have more time and energy to devote to "person oriented" concerns. Principals exhibiting this type of leadership behavior were found to be associated with a lower sense of alienation from work by teachers.

Hypothesis 3: There is an inverse relationship between the teachers' sense of alienation from work and the extent to which the negotiations process produces a mutually satisfactory rule structure to both the teachers and the principals.

Based upon the contention of Fromm[23] and the findings of Racz's study there is some evidence to partially support this hypothesis. Fromm associated impersonal management with worker alienation and Racz found a significantly negative correlation between "person oriented" principal behavior and teacher

alienation.[24] Whether in fact collective negotiations will result in principal behavior that is teacher oriented is somewhat doubtful at this point. The stance of many teacher organizations especially the AFT is that of excluding principals and other administrators from membership. This is a movement away from a professional colleague relationship increasing the distance between principals and teachers. Even boards of education, as Perry and Wildman point out, would prefer to have all administrators disassociated from the "rank-and-file" of teachers and aligned with the board. At this point in time, it appears that principals find the results of negotiations something less than satisfactory.

There appears to be a contradiction between the relationships assumed in Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2 and between the relationships specified in Hypothesis 2 and Hypothesis 3. This apparent contradiction is a superficial one. The negotiation process is seen as having either a reinforcing influence on the school system's bureaucratic structure and thus increasing the teachers' sense of alienation or as the procedure whereby new system structures can be devised that may reduce the teachers' sense of alienation. What is critical is the degree to which the process is truly a joint decision-making one and the nature of the rule structure that develops from the negotiations. The question is what impact collective negotiations in education will have on freezing the present structure and administrative practices of the educational organization? Collective negotiations could produce an agreement that formalizes the rules governing the work relationships so that it inhibits the personal interaction of teachers with each other, with building principals, and limit their freedom of interaction with students thus increasing their sense of alienation. On the other hand, collective negotiations offers the

possibility to truly involve teachers and principals jointly in decisions affecting their work, and therefore, reducing their sense of powerlessness and noninvolvement.

Dr. Vantine has indicated that the negotiations process has more than one form. If the negotiations process in operation in a school system is of the hard bargaining type, it is doubtful that lower teacher alienation from work will be an outcome. However, if the negotiations process takes the form of mutual accommodation then there is a greater likelihood of reduced teacher alienation from work.

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